

E1-7011

March 21, 2008
David Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Regarding: Finance Docket No. 35095
Alaska Railroad, Port McKenzie Rail Extension

I strongly oppose the Willow corridor route for the proposed Pt. MacKenzie Rail Extension for the following reasons:

1. Adding a second rail line to a small, rural community will place undue hardship on residents, their property values, safety and quality of life. According to a 2004 survey by Willow2020 and the Matanuska Susitna Borough, 90% of respondents chose Willow as a place to live and recreate because of the open country, beauty and quiet. Having two mainline tracks within a mile to will increase noise and danger and divide a community in thirds.
2. A Willow rail extension will bisect the heart of the Willow Creek State Recreation Area, home to an internationally renowned salmon and trout fishing stream, dramatically effecting the extraordinary natural and aesthetic qualities so easily accessible to the public.
3. The rail line would bisect the heart of the West Gateway Trail System, a highly popular recreation area and venue for the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, the Junior Iditarod, the Iron Dog Snowmobile Race, the Willow Winter Carnival and many other community and State events that depend on open spaces and a contiguous trail system.
4. The proposed corridor would run adjacent to the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, impacting recreational, natural and aesthetic qualities stated in the mission of Alaska State Parks.
5. The line would bisect a very important and concentrated moose wintering area, thus increasing moose mortality already bisected by the existing line and the Parks Highway. Hundreds of moose are struck and killed each year between Wasilla and Talkeetna.
6. The proposed rail, by compromising noise, viewsheds, and the semi wilderness character of the country in which visitors from around the world come to visit, would adversely impact local recreational and tourism related businesses.
7. The design of the rail bed and adjacent access road would create a dangerous situation by being located in a very popular snowmachine area. The bed elevation would invite snowmachines to jump the tracks and the access road parallel to the tracks would create an unauthorized trail.

8. There are much better options for the location of the rail extension, locations where it could enhance a community's development and less impact on natural resources. The city of Houston has passed a resolution supporting routing to their community. The Houston south corridor would involve no public managed lands and would not cross the Little Susitna River or the Parks Highway.

9. The following organizations agree with me in opposing the Willow corridor extending the Port MaKenzie rail extension to the main line:

Willow Area Community Organization
Alaska State Parks and Outdoor Recreation
State Parks Citizens Advisory Board
Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau
Alaska Travel Industry Association
Willow Dog Mushers Association
Alaska Skijorers Association
Tesoro Iron Dog Snowmachine Race
Iditarod Sled Dog Race
Deshka Landing Association, LLC
Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers Association
and many local businesses.

Steve Charles
Willow, Alaska